

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSC-05 PA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 991

INFO DIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

AMCONSUL UDORN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 3052

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINR, TH

SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER SENI'S NEW CABINET

REF : A. FBIS BKK211454Z FEB 75

B. BANGKOK 3050 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: THAI KING PHUMIPHON ADUNYADET OFFICIALLY APPOINTED
THE NEW GOVERNMENT OF PRIME MINISTER SENI PRAMOT ON FEBRUARY 22.
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ITS MEMBERS ARE PREDOMINENTLY YOUNG AND INEXPERIENCED, BUT

HIGHLY DEDICATED, INTELLIGENT, AND CAPABLE INDIVIDUALS READY TO TACKLE THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS. THE NEW GOVERNMENT CONTAINS A LARGE NUMBER OF POLITICIANS AND FEW TECHNOCRATS. IT IS FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. END SUMMARY.

1. NEARLY FOUR WEEKS AFTER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

PRIME MINISTER SENI PRAMOT HAS FINALLY ANNOUNCED HIS COALITION CABINET. THE KING HAS SIGNED THE ROYAL PROCLAMATION. (REF A) THE DEMOCRATS HOLD 17 POSITIONS, THE SOCIAL AGRARIANS HOLD 7, AND APOLITICAL MEN HOLD 7; A DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH AND OF INDUSTRY HAVE NOT YET BEEN ANNOUNCED. ON BALANCE IT APPEARS TO BE ONE OF THAILAND'S BETTER CABINETS, PERHAPS SURPASSED ONLY BY THE TWO SANYA CABINETS, WHICH CONTAINED SOME OF THAILAND'S MOST HIGHLY QUALIFIED AND EXPERIENCED TECHNOCRATS. SENI'S CABINET IS EXTREMELY YOUNG (AVERAGE AGE ABOUT 51.5 WITH THE MAJORITY UNDER 50); WELL-EDUCATED (14 BACHELOR DEGREES, 4 MASTER DEGREES, 3 DOCTORATES, 3 SERVICE ACADEMY DIPLOMAS); HEAVILY WEIGHTED WITH LAWYERS (12, MOSTLY FROM THAMMASAT); POLITICALLY CONSCIOUS; IDEALISTIC; INEXPERIENCED BUT EXTREMELY DEDICATED; COMMITTED TO A DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT; AND REGIONALLY WELL BALANCED. SENI SEEMS TO HAVE BASED HIS SELECTIONS MORE ON PERSONAL, FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL LOYALTY TO THE DEMOCRAT PARTY, THAN ON PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS. THE CABINET INCLUDES A NUMBER OF WEALTHY DEMOCRATS WHO HAVE HEAVILY SUBSIDIZED THE PARTY OVER THE YEAR

(PHICHAI, LEK, AND SURAT), DEMOCRATIC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND A NUMBER OF SENI'S CLOSE ADVISERS WITHIN THE PARTY (PHICHAI, SURIN, BUNYING, DAMRONG, AND CHUAN).

2. THE WEALTHY IN THE CABINET, HOWEVER, HAVE FEW LINKS TO THE BIG SINO-THAI BUSINESS MAGNATES OR THEIR HUGE FINANCIAL EMPIRES WITH WHICH MILITARY GOVERNMENTS HAVE BEEN HEAVILY INVOLVED. NONE OF ITS MEMBERS HAS STRONG LINKS TO THE ROYAL FAMILY. THERE ARE NO ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY OFFICERS IN THE CABINET. THE THREE RETIRED MILITARY MEN IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY HAVE NEVER BEEN HEAVILY INVOLVED IN POLITICAL MANEUVERING, BUT ALL HAVE TIES TO THE PRESENT AND PAST MILITARY LEADERS. THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE IS CLOSE TO BOTH ARMY COMMANDER IN CHIEF KRIT SIWARA AND FORMER

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DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAPHAT CHARUSATHIAN. THE MINISTER AND HIS DEPUTIES DO NOT HAVE A REPUTATION FOR BOLDNESS OR FOR ORIGINALITY OF THOUGHT. WE SUSPECT KRIT MAY HAVE CHOSEN OR APPROVED THEM BECAUSE OF THEIR PROBABLE TRACTABILITY.

3. WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, THE MEMBERS OF THE CABINET ARE FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD THE UNITED STATES AND AMERICANS, AND ARE FAIRLY WELL KNOWN TO THE MEMBERS OF THE MISSION. THE DEFENSE

MINISTER OVER THE YEARS HAS SUPPORTED THE US MILITARY PRESENCE HERE, AND AS RECENTLY AS FEB 20 CONFIRMED THAT SUPPORT. THE NEW FOREIGN MINISTER, PHICHLAI RATTAKUN IS AN OLD FRIEND OF THE UNITED STATES AND HAS LONG DEFENDED THE CLOSE THAI-US RELATIONSHIP AND THE US MILITARY PRESENCE HERE. HE HAS EVEN TAKEN ON FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER THANAT KHOMAN IN OUR DEFENSE. IN RECENT STATEMENTS, HOWEVER, HE HAS CALLED FOR A STAGED WITHDRAWAL ACCORDING TO A FIXED SCHEDULE, BUT ONE, HE ADDS, THAT WILL NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THAILAND'S SECURITY (REF B). PHICHLAI'S DEPUTY, LEK NANA, IS A COMPLETE UNKNOWN AS FAR AS HIS FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS ARE CONCERNED. SENI REPORTEDLY BROUGHT HIM INTO THE CABINET BECAUSE HE IS A MUSLIM AND WILL FACILITATE SMOOTH CONTACTS WITH THE ARAB OIL PRODUCING COUNTRIES. THIS, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO BE HIS ONLY QUALIFICATION FOR THE JOB.

4. THE CABINET'S MOST NOTABLE SHORTCOMING IS THAT MOST OF ITS MEMBERS ARE SORELY LACKING IN PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE, PARTICULARLY EXPERIENCE IN RUNNING LARGE GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACIES AND IN MAKING AND EXECUTING POLICY. ITS MEMBERS ARE EXTREMELY YOUNG MEN OF UNPROVEN ABILITIES. PARTICULARLY WEAK MINISTRIES IN THESE RESPECTS ARE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, COMMERCE, PUBLIC HEALTH, COMMUNICATIONS AND JUSTICE.

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF CABINET MEMBERS WILL FOLLOW.

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